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PHIL 200E.02: Ethics - The Great Traditions

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Philosophy 200: Introductory Ethics

Fall 2007

Dr. Deborah Slicer

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O.H.: tba

This is an introductory course in ethics. There are no prerequisites. We want to get at the bottom of the judgments we make about what is morally right and wrong. Specifically, what kind of reasons can we give for those judgments and prescriptions? We will study in depth three western moral theories that we frequently appeal to in order to justify the moral claims we make: theories about virtuous character, Kantian and rights theories, and utilitarianism. We'll also look at critiques of these three theories. In order to understand how these theories are applied and how satisfying they really are, we will test their application to some contemporary moral issues: abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, duties to the environment, and duties to rescue. In addition to our reading, we'll watch three films that explore the application of these principles. By the end of the semester you should be more conscious and articulate about the moral judgments and prescriptions that you, family, friends, politicians, and religious authorities make, if nothing else.

Schedule

- 8/28 Hello
- 30 *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (EMP), chpt. 1
- 9/4 *The Right Thing to Do* (RTD), p. 20-22, "Arguments"
RTD, chpt 10
- 6 RTD, chpt. 11
- 11 EMP, chpt 2
- 13 EMP, chpt 4
- 18 EMP, chpt 5
- 20 Crimes and Misdemeanors, film
- 25 Crimes
- 27 discussion of Crimes
- 10/2 Utilitarianism: EMP, chpt. 6; RDT, chpt 8
- 7 EMP, chpt. 7
- 9 NO class
- 11 RTK chpt 17, and chpt. 18
- 16 Kant and Rights: EMP, chpt. 8
- 18 EMP, chpt. 9
- 23 RTD, chpt. 24, and chpt. 25; "Death Penalty Unfair," David Love (x)
- 25 Dead Man Walking, film
- 30 finish Dead Man, discussion
- 11/1 discussion Dead Man and capital punishment

6 Virtue: EMP, chpt. 12
8 RTD, chpt. 4
13 EMP, chpt. 11
11/15 RTD, chpt. 22
11/20 NO class
27 Weapons of the Spirit, film
28 Weapons
12/4 discussion of Weapons
12/6 Last day!

Texts:

The Right Thing to Do, James Rachels & Stuart Rachels

The Elements of Moral Philosophy, James Rachels & Stuart Rachels

(x): paper reserve (Mansfield Library) and e-reserve (Password: Phil 200/Slicer)

Requirements

- 1) 13 weekly mini-exams (You'll receive questions on Thursday prior to the exam. I'll ask one question on the exam.) 55%
- 2) Comprehensive final exam 35%
- 3) Ethical Autobiography, 3 typed, double-spaced pages, **due 9/4 at the beginning of class. I will accept NO late papers.** 10%